

Proper Views of Chastening

Psalm 39

David wrote this Psalm and sent it to *Jeduthun*. Psalm 62 and Psalm 77 are also written to Jeduthun. He is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 25:1 as one of music leaders in the temple. In 2 Chronicles 35:15 he is called “*the king’s seer.*”

Psalm 38 and Psalm 39 were probably written during the same time when David was being chastened by the Lord (cf. 38:2; 39:10).

Chastisement lead David to “*take heed*” to his ways (v. 1). That is what chastening should do—Lead a believer to take inventory of his life and reconsider what he is doing.

➡ In Psalm 39 David gives us a **proper view of God’s chastening**:

I. **Chastening helps to restrain our words** (vs. 1-3, 9).

Socrates tells a story about a man named Pambo, who came to a learned man, and asked him to teach him some psalm or other. He began to read Psalm 39, “*I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.*” Having read the first verse, Pambo shut the book, and got up to leave, saying, “I will go learn that point first.”

After several months the old man asked Pambo when he would return to learn the rest of the Psalm. Pambo answered he had not yet learned the first verse.

➡ The Bible has a lot to say about our tongues. God devotes an entire chapter to the issue of our tongue (James 3).

➡ Here are eight kinds of tongues mentioned in Scripture:

1. The BRIDLED tongue (Ps. 39:1). Proverbs 29:20—“*Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*” James 1:9 admonishes us to be swift to hear and slow to speak.
2. The BENEVOLENT tongue (Prov. 31:26).
3. The BURNT tongue (Luke 16:24).
4. The BACKBITING tongue (Prov. 25:23)
5. The BOASTFUL tongue (Ps. 12:3; James 3:5)

6. The **BOGUS** tongue (Ps. 109:2; 120:2-3).
 7. The **BLESSING** tongue (Ps. 35:28).
 8. The **BENEFICIAL** tongue (Prov. 12:18).
- A. The **RESOLVE** to be silent (v. 1). David resolved to keep his tongue from sinning. He was probably fearful he may say the wrong thing and make matters worse.
- *“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”* (Prov. 21:23).
 - *“Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God... let thy words be few... Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin...”* (Eccl. 5:2, 6).
 - v. 9—David could not say anything against his chastisement since it was God who did it. He knew he deserved what he was getting.
- B. The **REASON** to be silent (v. 1). Sometimes it would do us all good to just sit and be silent, especially when you’re in the presence of the wicked. They will watch what you say to use it against you.

Today we have so many ways to “speak” (texting, Facebook, Twitter, email, FaceTime, etc.). With all these new ways of communicating there is a greater danger of hastily typing words we might regret later. Employers now look at social media before hiring a person.

Beware that one angry email, or one hastily written post may come come back to “bite you.”

- C. The **RESTRAINT** to be silent (v.1). Beware of a loose tongue! David would bridle his tongue. David prayed, *“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”* (Ps. 141:3)

A white man and an Indian were arrested for bootlegging. When they went to court, the judge spoke to the Indian first. For ten minutes the judge tried to explain the charges to the Indian. The Indian only responded “UGH,” to each charge. Frustrated, the judge finally just dismissed the Indian from the case.

Then the white man spent an hour and half trying to explain why he wasn't guilty. The judge pronounced him guilty anyway and fined him \$500.00.

As the white man walked out of court, his Indian companion met him outside the courthouse. Immediately the white man began to complain how his Indian buddy got off scott-free. The Indian simply shrugged his shoulders and said, "UGH, white man talk too much."

-
- Ecclesiastes 3:7—There is *"a time to keep silence, and a time to speak."* Wisdom will let you know when that time is.
 - Proverbs 17:28—*"Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."*

I've heard people try excuse an unkind remark or angry outburst by saying, "I spoke without thinking." That is NOT true! The tongue is not connected to your parasympathetic nervous system. The only functions of the body connected to the parasympathetic nervous system that require no thought is your breathing and your cardio vascular system. Every other bodily function requires thought. The tongue cannot move neurotically without you sending a signal from your brain. So when someone says, "I spoke without thinking," you can tell them they are wrong. They may not have thought very long before they spoke, but they did think, and therefore that makes them responsible for what they said.

- D. The **RELEASE** of being silent (v. 3).
1. In his sorrow David was burning to say something (v. 3), perhaps in his defense (cf. Jer. 20:9).
 2. It does no good to complain to others about God chastening us, especially the unsaved (v. 1). Negative talk before the wicked gives them a reason to reject God (see Ps. 73:14-15).
 3. If you are going to talk to someone about how God is treating you, you should go directly to God. This is what David does.

II. **Chastening helps to reveal our weakness** (vs. 4-9).

- A. Life is **FLEETING** (vs. 4-5).

1. A “*handbreath*” is just four fingers wide—The shortest ancient measurement of distance. We need to be reminded that life is short we we don’t waste it. Some people live like they think they will be here forever.
 2. David realized his time on earth was running out (v. 13). He wanted to know how much time he had left (vs. 4). By understanding how fleeting his life was, David could make the best use of his remaining days.
 - A good question to ask yourself occasionally is: “If I knew I only had six months before I die, what would I do?”
- B. Life is **FRAGILE** (v. 4). How temporary our lives are. Your body is not indestructible. It was not made to last indefinitely. Psalm 103:14—*He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.* We are dying by degrees. Eternity awaits us.
- C. Life is **FUTILE**, *apart from God* (v. 5 cf. Isa. 41:24).

No modern psychologist would tolerate this kind of negative view of one’s self. Every modern version changes Psalm 39:5. For example: NIV—“Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure.” NKJV—“Every man at his best state is but vapor.”

- “A bad day for your ego is a good day for your soul.” —Jillian Michaels
1. A proper “negative” estimation of yourself is good for you (vs. 5-6). Apart from God, man when he is at the top of his game, healthy, and successful, is still nothing—worthless. What good is your life, if in the end you lose your own soul? You will carry nothing out of this world when you die (Ps. 49:17; 1 Tim. 6:7). **The only thing that makes my life worthwhile is God in it.** Everything else is vanity (Eccl. 1:2, 14).
 - “*Selah*” (v. 5, 11)— Stop and think about that!
 2. v. 7—**What do men wait for?** Things to get better? Self-improvement? A new President? Peace on earth? A perfect church? An unbiased news media?

- “*Lord, what wait I for?*” What am I waiting for. I just need to trust God for whatever the future holds.
- v. 8— A proper perspective of life should lead us live for God, and maintain a good testimony before the lost.

III. **Chastening helps to right our wrongs** (vs. 10-11 cf. Heb. 12:5-13).

IV. **Chastening helps to revive our work** (vs. 12-13).

- Verse 12— David recognized he was stranger and sojourner with God. This world was not his home He knew his time was running out before he would “*go hence, and be no more*” [“*no more*” cf. Job 7:7-10.]
- Verse 13— David asks God for two things:
 - A. To be **SPARED**—“*O spare me...*” It wasn’t that David was afraid to die. He wanted his life to be spared to finish what he started. There was more he wanted to do before he died.
 - B. To be **STRENGTHENED**—“*...that I may recover strength...*” He wanted a “second wind” to finish his course with power. He wanted to die with his “boots on.”
 - ➡ Perhaps David had a “*bucket list*.” Are there some things you’d like to do “before you go hence and be no more?”

SUMMATION (vs. 12-13): “**LIVE LIKE YOU’RE DYIN’**” (song by Lenka)

How to Live Like You’re Dyin’—

1. Live life with a **PURPOSE** worthy of God.
2. Live life with a **PASSION** wholly sold out for God. I know I’m on the home stretch of my earthly life. I don’t want to coast across the finish line. I want cross the finish line running. I want to live each day as if it could be my last (because one day it will be my last!).

In the movie *Doc Hollywood*, Dr. Neil Shulman said, “Life is a dash between two dates on a tombstone.” A “dash” separates a beginning and an ending. That 1 or 2 inch mark stands for a whole life.

3. Live life with a **PERSPECTIVE** you will give account to God.